Philanthropic Response to Immigrants and Refugees: 1990–2015

For the past 25 years, GCIR, our members, and funding partners have mounted a wide range of efforts to address the needs, uplift the contributions, and help immigrants and refugees reach their full potential.

DELIVERING ON THE DREAM (DOTD) FORMED

DOTD forms to support DACA implementation. By early 2016, the network would grow to 15 funding collaboratives in 12 states. More than 100 local, statewide, and national funders, a third of whom are new to immigration, would commit nearly $20 million to build service delivery and capacity in 16 states.

JOYCE FOUNDATION LAUNCHES CITIZENSHIP FUNDING INITIATIVE

The Joyce Foundation, based in Chicago, undertakes a special project to promote naturalization for eligible immigrants.

IRVINE FOUNDATION LAUNCHES CENTRAL VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

The James Irvine Foundation would invest more than $19 million over ten years to promote naturalization and civic engagement among immigrants and refugees in California’s Central Valley.

EMMA LAZARUS FUND CREATED

George Soros creates the Emma Lazarus Fund at the Open Society Institute, committing $50 million to address the disproportionate impact of welfare reform on immigrants and refugees.

MINNESOTA NICE OR NOT CAMPAIGN

Spearheaded by The Minneapolis Foundation, this communications campaign directly tackles Minnesota’s less-than-warm reception of immigrants and refugees, generating lively debate on immigration across the state.

GCIR BROADENS REACH

GCIR programs bring funders to Los Angeles, Miami, and the Arizona border to examine immigration policy challenges, as well as to develop models that promote the rights of low-wage workers and the integration of low-income children, youth, and families.

IMMIGRATION GAINS RELEVANCE IN NEW GATEWAYS

The Colorado Trust launches the Supporting Refugees and Immigrant Families Initiative that would grant a total of $11 million over seven years.

IMMIGRANTS’ CONTRIBUTIONS BECOME FOCUS

GCIR’s new strategic plan responds to the volatile policy environment and focuses philanthropy on maximizing the contributions of diverse immigrant communities.

PHILANTHROPY CONSIDERS COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

GCIR convenes a communications strategy meeting to discuss ongoing concerns over the connections between immigration and terrorism. Programs look at African refugees; Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians; farmworkers; and immigrants in new gateway states.

INCREASED FOCUS ON CIVIC PARTICIPATION

GCIR publishes “Pursuing Democracy’s Promise” and organizes programs on civic and electoral participation, youth organizing, worker centers, and education.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION TOOLKIT RELEASED

“The Immigrant Integration Toolkit,” which debuts at GCIR’s national convening in Denver, would become highly influential, shaping and elevating immigrant integration grants in the years to come. The toolkit remains the most downloaded GCIR publication a decade after its publication.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION BECOMES DRIVING FORCE

GCIR programming in Minnesota, Georgia, Arizona, New Hampshire, and Washington focuses on on integration. California GCIR members form the California Immigrant Integration Initiative to share information and coordinate funding strategies across the state. The Chicago Community Trust launches a three-year $1.5 million Immigration Integration initiative.

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION MOMENTUM CONTINUES

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation awards nearly $4.4 million through its new immigrant integration initiatives and would continue innovative funding in the field in the years to come.

FOUR FREEDOMS FUND RECOGNIZED

Taryn Higashi of Unbound Philanthropy and Gari Mannion of the Carnegie Corporation of New York receive the Robert W. Scrivner Award for Founding the Four Freedoms Fund. With the prize money, they establish the Freedom from Fear Awards.

CALIFORNIA COUNTS!

GCIR members invest more than $10 million to support 2010 Census outreach in California. GCIR coordinates philanthropic support of this statewide census campaign and releases a companion evaluation report and funders’ guide.

NEW AMERICANS CAMPAIGN (NAC) LAUNCHED

The New America Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Hewlett Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation launch a multiyear national effort to support an immigrant with federal money, establish The Middle East and North Africa. GCIR’s new strategic plan seeks to advance immigrant rights, economic justice and integration, and civic integration—as well as address unanticipated issues that may emerge.

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Throughout GCIR’s 25-year history, immigrants and refugees in the U.S. and across the globe have faced a volatile policy environment that has alternatively been welcoming and hostile, reflecting conflicting visions of who we are and want to be as a society.

CONGRESS PASSES IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1990
Building on IRCA passed in 1986, this law increases the overall number of immigrants authorized to enter the U.S., creates a more efficient naturalization process, and expands resources for border enforcement.

UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS FACING NEW ENFORCEMENT
Immigrants are no longer able to discover the U.S. without fear of deportation, as enforcement agencies are empowered to report them to federal immigration authorities.

THE HAITIAN REFUGEE CRISIS EMERGES
A military coup forces 200,000 Haitians to flee their country. The U.S. Coast Guard intercepts thousands, and the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay is used to screen Haitian asylum seekers.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS CONTINUE TO ERODE
Federal welfare, immigration, and anti-terrorism laws fray the social safety net for immigrants and refugees, toughen immigration enforcement by enlisting cooperation of local police forces, and further expand employment verification procedures.

IMMIGRANTS’ ADVOCACY FORCES POLICY CHANGE
Congress restores Food Stamps and Supplemental Security Income to certain children, elderly, and disabled immigrants. It also enacts laws protecting immigrant victims of trafficking, violence, and crimes. Many states create substitute health and welfare benefits for immigrants, but the fight to maintain these programs continues today.

MOMENTUM FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM GAINED...AND LOST
The DREAM Act is first introduced; terms of what would become AgJOBS are agreed on; immigration authorities begin conducting community raids and individual enforcement, detaining 20,000 per day and deporting 185,000 that year.

9/11 ATTACKS SPUR RESTRICTIVE LAWS
The 9/11 attacks not only halt all reform efforts, but also result in the passage of USA PATRIOT Act, which greatly expands the government’s anti-terrorism and surveillance powers and further erodes civil rights and civil liberties for all, especially Arab and Muslim communities.

9/11 ATTACKS SPUR RESTRICTIVE LAWS
Congress passes Homeland Security Act, creating Department of Homeland Security. Immigrant males 16 and older from mostly Muslim countries are subject to special fingerprinting. Florida signs first local law enforcement agreement to cooperate with federal immigration authorities in detaining immigrants. The Social Security Administration expands its verification program to identify unauthorized workers.

STATE ANTI-IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION SURGES
In the wake of new federal rules on state ID cards and driver’s licenses, Arizona passes Prop. 200, instituting restrictive voter ID laws and blocking unauthorized immigrants’ access to public benefits. Illinois becomes first state to adopt immigrant integration policy, against the tide of 150 anti-immigrant bills introduced in 30 states.

RESISTANCE, REFORM, AND ENFORCEMENT
Historic marches of millions of immigrants and their allies across the U.S. renew hope for federal immigration reform, but Congress retreats fearing political backlash. ICE steps up raids and other enforcement, detaining 20,000 per day and deporting 285,000 that year.

IMMIGRATION REFORM STALLS AGAIN; STATES STEP IN
Another major push for federal immigration reform fails, and state legislatures step in to consider a record 3,562 immigrant-related bills. The 240 laws and 50 resolutions that pass restrict access to everything from public benefits to higher education, and codify law enforcement collaboration with federal immigration authorities, among other restrictions.

HEIGHTENED ENFORCEMENT AS FIGHT FOR REFORM CONTINUES
Immigration authorities begin conducting community raids and individual enforcement seeking those with civil immigration violations. Generating widespread fear, Secure Communities enables local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities to share databases, allowing local officials to identify the immigration status of all foreign-born in their custody. Senator Edward Kennedy, a longtime champion of immigration, seeks to amend new federal laws to prevent detention and deportation of families with children born in the U.S.

DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA) IS ANNOUNCED
After the DREAM Act fails in Congress, President Obama announces DACA, which grants two-year, renewable work permits and protection from deportation to eligible unauthorized immigrants. More than 713,000 immigrants would secure DACA status by late 2015, improving their earning potential and bringing them into the economic mainstream.

CENTRAL AMERICANS SEEK REFUGE IN THE U.S.
Record numbers of unaccompanied children and families fleeing violence and persecution in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala seek refuge in the U.S. The Administration reopens family detention centers, fast tracks processing of asylum cases, and supports Mexican government interdiction efforts.

U.S. DEEPLY DIVIDED ON IMMIGRATION
Texas and 26 other states sue to prevent implementation of DACA and DACA+. Twenty states or state university systems have laws or policies that allow eligible unauthorized immigrants to pay in-state tuition. A California judge finds family detention centers housing Central American asylum seekers violate the rights of children and orders their release into community-based settings. Amid concerns over terrorism and rising xenophobia and Islamophobia, presidential debates and public discourse on immigration turn virulent.

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